



**Iowa  
Early Care  
and Education  
Professional Development**

# **Core Body of Knowledge for Best Practices**

*What early care and education practitioners who work with young children and families need to know and be able to do to provide quality early care and education for our children.*

The **Iowa Early Care & Education Professional Development *Core Body of Knowledge for Best Practices*** identifies eight components of best practice. Each component is divided into competencies that have identified core knowledge and associated observable indicators. The observable indicators are broken down into four levels of competence that are defined as:

**Level 1 - Novice -**

- Entry/beginning level
- Less than one year experience
- Seeking required training and identifying additional training options

**Level 2 - Practicing -**

- Practicing skills gained from knowledge
- Seeking additional knowledge

**Level 3 - Skilled -**

- Consistently connecting knowledge and skills in daily practice
- Seeking additional knowledge and refining skills

**Level 4 - Master -**

- Ability to model knowledge and behaviors and to facilitate growth in others

## Core Body of Knowledge for Best Practices

***What early care and education practitioners who work with young children and families need to know and be able to do to provide quality early care and education for our children.***

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# 1. Knowledge Component of Best Practice – Health, Safety, and Nutrition

## Rationale

Early care and education can set the foundation for quality early learning experiences by ensuring that each child has the opportunity for optimum health and well being, that each child is safe, and that all children receive good nutrition.

Early care and education practitioners must have a working knowledge of health and health practices to support children and families in maintaining optimal health status. Basic safety management procedures contribute to the prevention of accidents and active supervision and teaching children safety practices contribute to a safe environment. Knowledge and skills in injury prevention, handling emergencies, accidents and injuries are essential to keeping children safe. Children need well-balanced meals in order to meet their daily energy needs and to help them grow physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively so they will be able to play and learn.

## Competency Area: Health

## Knowledge

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Understand the transmission of diseases and know the basics of disease precautions.
- Understand and apply a broad definition of health that includes a child and families' physical, mental, and spiritual health in policy and practices.
- Use the National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs in developing and implementing daily health practices.
- Maintain current knowledge of health related emergency and first aid procedures.
- Follow state immunization laws and regulations for children and personnel.

## Indicators/Observable Practices

### Level 1 - Novice

- Practices effective hand washing procedures to reduce spread of diseases (e.g. before handling food, after bathroom procedure, after wiping noses, etc.).
- Supports children in effective use of hand washing procedures (e.g. holding child to sink, enforcing rules, etc.).
- Practices effective sanitation procedures when cleaning toys, dishes, and materials.
- Keeps environment free of health hazards, including allergy and asthma inducing substances.
- Practices universal precautions to avoid/control blood-borne pathogens to ensure safety of adults and children.
- Maintains a separate diapering area from area used for food service.
- Adapts health procedures to individual needs.

### Level 2 - Practicing

- Assesses each child's health status daily and objectively documents when necessary.
- Provides appropriate care for ill children.
- Seeks training in communicable disease control.
- Recognizes and accepts, as far as possible within regulations, cultural health practices.
- Models personal health and safety practices known to enhance well-being.

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- Seeks information regarding new health concerns in the community (e.g. lead levels, water fluoridation, etc.).
- Identifies and follows policies regarding health concerns and confidentiality.
- Identifies and follows policies for informing parents of current health concerns in the program.

### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Maintains a readily accessible list of health resources for emergencies, for diagnosis, for treatment, and for information.
- Incorporates developmentally appropriate and culturally appropriate health materials into curriculum/learning experiences. (S.A. would include teaching universal precautions.)
- Addresses the child or family's individual needs for parent education, information, diagnosis, and treatment.

### **Level 4 - Master**

- Uses a variety of resources to seek "Best Practice" answers to questions about health.
- Designs and implements curriculum activities emphasizing healthy bodies, healthy lifestyle, and healthy environment.
- Works with health care professionals in the community to ensure that the health needs of children are met.

## **Competency Area: Safety**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Understand importance of routine care and maintenance of materials and equipment.
- Understand basic emergency procedures and safe practices.
- Understand the fundamentals of active supervision.
- Demonstrate strategies to help children learn to keep themselves safe.
- Understands the fundamentals of first aid and CPR.
- Understand the basics of preventing injuries and handling injuries and emergencies.
- Understand the principles of disaster preparedness and develop strategies to prevent injury related to natural or human initiated disasters and emergencies.

### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Responds immediately and sympathetically to a child's injury or fear.
- Handles accidents and injuries appropriately (per first aid training).
- Supervises all children's activities, both indoors and outdoors, to prevent dangerous situations and accidents.
- Selects safe toys, materials, and equipment appropriate for age and developmental level of children.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Teaches children age appropriate safety rules and practices, enforcing them consistently.
- Establishes limits related to the use of equipment and space.
- Maintains a clean and clutter free space for children to play.
- Ensures that safety equipment, such as smoke detectors and fire extinguishers, are in working condition and knows how to use them.
- Regularly practices emergency and safety procedures such as fire, disaster, and tornado drills.
- Maintains an accessible current list of phone numbers for contacting parents and emergency services.
- Keeps familiar with all regulations mandated by licensing/registration in Iowa that pertain to safety.
- Follows procedures for documentation and notification of suspected abuse and neglect of children.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Organizes space into functional areas with traffic patterns that eliminate accidents and injuries.
- Plans learning experiences with safety precautions in mind.
- Regularly checks and documents that both the indoor and outdoor environment, including the building and all equipment, are safe and free from hazards.
- Plans emergency and safety procedures, such as fire, disaster, and tornado drills, and documents implementation.
- Follow policies and procedures for reporting and documenting injuries, accidents, and dealing with emergencies.

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**Level 4 Master**

- Uses additional resources beyond state requirements to assist in making a safety plan.
- Integrates information from many sources into curriculum planning.
- Advocates for environmental safety.



## **Competency Area: Nutrition and Mealtime**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners and food service employees shall:

- Understand children's need for good nutrition and how this impacts a child's growth and development for all ages (birth through school age).
- Understand that infants are to be fed when they are hungry and that as children grow food needs to be presented at frequent regular mealtimes.
- Understand the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements (if participating).
- Understand that food plays many roles for children: social, emotional, and cultural.
- Understand the need for a pleasant, relaxed mealtime.
- Understand what foods may present hazards for individual children according to their needs and abilities (choking and allergies).
- Use correct procedures when faced with food related emergencies.
- Understand the priority for safe food handling.
- Use the National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs, Department of Human Services (DHS) Licensing/Registration rules, CACFP regulations, Head Start Performance Standards (if applicable), and the guidelines for CACFP when developing and implementing policies and procedures regarding nutrition and mealtimes.
- Understand what required food service related records must be maintained according to DHS, CACFP, and Head Start rules (if applicable).
- Understand what records must be maintained for tax records (for home providers).

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### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Practices safe food handling procedures when purchasing, preparing, and serving meals and snacks.
- Maintains safe and sanitary kitchen, food storage, and dining areas.
- Prepares foods or selects forms of food that will prevent the hazard of choking or other health risks according to the age and needs of individual children.
- Creates safe, relaxed, and pleasant snacks and mealtimes for the children.
- Sits with children at snack and mealtime to provide adequate supervision of children.
- Models appropriate mealtime behavior, and engages children with appropriate mealtime conversation.
- Assigns equal value to all foods, and does not use food as a reward or punishment.
- Encourages and supports children according to their capabilities during mealtime and food activities.
- Maintains required daily records for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (if participating).

#### **Level 2 – Practicing**

- Plans nutritious meals meeting the required guidelines (DHS and CACFP).
- Posts menus for parents.
- Selects and prepares foods using methods to maintain maximum nutrition.
- Practices the division of responsibility at mealtime between the adult (provide food and appropriate encouragement) and the child (decide what to eat, how much, and whether to eat).
- Uses mealtime as educational opportunity for children.

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- Encourages children to learn and develop self-help skills during mealtimes and food activities.
- Observes children during mealtimes to become familiar with their individual eating behaviors, patterns, and skills.
- Communicates with parents regarding the child's eating patterns, mealtime skills, food needs, and food activities.
- Consults with families about children's special nutritional needs or food allergies.
- Plans, guides, and adapts food related activities for different ages of children.
- Maintains required monthly records for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (if participating).
- Maintains a food service budget.

### **Level 3 – Skilled**

- Recognizes stages of development and how this impacts children's eating abilities/patterns, and the selection of feeding methods.
- Recognizes when a child may need to be referred to a health professional because of nutritional need(s) or feeding difficulties.
- Uses a wide variety of creditable resources to increase knowledge about basic nutrition and children's feeding needs.
- Plans and evaluates menus according to sound nutrition practices.
- Plans menus to incorporate foods from different cultures.
- Provides appropriate size eating utensils, serving equipment, tables, and chairs, etc. to help children be comfortable during mealtimes and to assist children in learning self-help skills.
- Incorporates family style meal service following safe and sanitary procedures.
- Develops and evaluates written mealtime policy that outlines expectations of staff and children (according to age) for mealtimes.
- Provides administrative responsibilities to maintain nutrition and mealtime as an integrated part of the child care program.
- Supervises other staff members' responsibilities regarding menu planning, meal preparation, sanitation practices, and other required recordkeeping tasks.
- Applies nutrition/mealtimes knowledge appropriately in the child care setting.
- Maintains accurate records according to state and federal guidelines.

### **Level 4 - Master**

- Works with community organizations and identifies other potential resources to provide good nutrition to children.
- Assists families in locating community resources to provide good nutrition to their children.
- Provides food related educational opportunities for parents and staff members.
- Communicates with board members or advisory committee regarding the center's nutrition policies and procedures.
- Communicates with board members or advisory committee about participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (if applicable).
- Advocates for nutrition policies that will impact all children in the community.

## 2. Knowledge Component of Best Practice - Child Growth and Development

### Rationale

"The study of child development is one of the cornerstones of early childhood education and care" (Feeney, S. Christensen, D. & Moravcik, E., 1996). "To make valid decisions about how to teach young children, teachers must know how children develop and learn..." An understanding of child development knowledge permits professionals to make... "general predictions within an age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and also challenging to children" (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997).

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### **Competency Area: Child Growth and Development**

#### Knowledge

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Know child growth and development and identify developmental milestones.
- Understand the definition of developmental disability/delay and understand the philosophy of inclusion.
- Understand that growth, development, and learning are progressive; moving from simple to more complex in an ordered (sequential) pattern.
- Understand that children have individual differences and variations in learning styles and personalities.
- Understand the influence of individual differences and variations in learning styles and personalities.
- Understand the influence of individual temperament, family, language, culture, and community on children's development.
- Identify the developmental domains (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive/language) and understand that they are integrated for each child.
- Understand that learning does not happen in one area at a time but rather through all areas interconnecting (integrated).
- Know current brain research.
- Know the major theories of child development and learning.
- Understand that early childhood education has a knowledge base of research and theory.

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#### Indicators/Observable Practices

##### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Engages in safe, secure, responsive relationships with each child to promote optimal development.
- Provides a variety of activities that foster the development of the whole child.
- Provides time and opportunity for children to learn and develop through play.
- Provides experiences for all children that support a wide range of developmental skills.

##### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Incorporates individual, family, cultural, and community influences when planning.
- Adapts curriculum/learning experiences as children grow and develop.
- Compares children's developmental levels with age appropriate norms and notes concerns.

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- Makes referrals based on ongoing observations, classroom assessments, and professional judgment for an evaluation to determine child's current skills and abilities.
- Participates with consultants (as needed) to assist in meeting children's individual needs.
- Utilizes resources available for children's special needs.

### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Incorporates children's individual, unique, and special needs (illness, disabilities, family stress, etc.) into curriculum planning.
- Adapts curriculum/learning experiences into appropriate experiences for children by using knowledge of children's development as a framework.
- Integrates goals from IEP (individualized education plan) and IFSP (individualized family service plan) into daily activities and routines.
- Collaborates with consultants and parents (as needed) in planning learning experiences for children's individual needs.
- Shares information with families about the general principles of child growth and development.

### **Level 4 - Master**

- Integrates information on growth, development, and learning patterns of individuals and groups and applies to practice.
- Communicates major theories, research, and issues relevant to child growth and development.

### 3. Knowledge Component of Best Practice - Child Observation and Assessment

#### Rationale

The purpose of observation and assessment is to provide information needed for appropriate curriculum planning. Assessments and evaluations are used to make decisions about the learning process of every child on a continuous basis and influences decisions about strategies for fostering the development and learning of individuals and groups of children. In some situations, a child may need special support to be successful in the learning environment. (Primary Program: Learning and Growing in the Heartland, 1993)

#### **Competency Area: Child Observation and Assessment**

#### Knowledge

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Understand child growth and development including the sequences of typical and atypical development.
- Understand assessment procedures and instruments used to determine the child's strengths as well as challenges.
- Understand assessment theories used for decision making and curriculum planning.
- Understand assessment practices and results are influenced by culture, language, and other environmental factors, as well as varying learning styles.
- Understand the questionable validity and potential negative impact of standardized assessment on young children and their families and recommend only when necessary for the development of the child.

#### Indicators/Observable Practices

##### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Protects confidentiality of children's assessment information.
- Assists with collection of information about each child's development.

##### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Collects information from families on child's development, skills, and interests.
- Records growth, health, behavior, and progress of each child and shares the information with other appropriate individuals. (For infant/toddlers includes daily exchange of info.)
- Documents individual children's development and learning through collections of work samples, observations, assessments, and media records.
- Uses observations and assessments of children in order to incorporate individual needs into daily activities.
- Discusses assessment results with families in a clear, supportive way.

##### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Uses a variety of assessment strategies including observation in natural settings, parental interviews, and portfolio information, to describe the whole child.
- Evaluates collected information to support, and enhance children's development through long term curriculum planning.
- Develops and follows a schedule of recording children's development and behavior.

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- Works together with parents and children, when appropriate, to make decisions which support development and learning.
- Works together with parents to make decisions concerning referrals to other agencies and programs offering diagnostic/intervention services.

**Level 4 - Master**

- Involves multi-disciplinary team members (when appropriate) as well as the family, in assessing the child's strengths and challenges in order to set goals for the child.
- Establishes criteria, procedures, and documentation methods for assessment of children.

## 4. Knowledge Component of Best Practice - Interactions with Children

### Rationale

Interactions between children, and between children and adults, have a profound influence on the child's experience in care. An understanding of the effective principles and practices of child guidance allows the early education professional to make decisions regarding activities and interactions that promote a safe, secure environment that encourage prosocial behavior, conflict resolution and problem solving, and build a sense of community for parents and children.

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### **Competency Area: Providing Individual Guidance**

### Knowledge

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Know the developmental stages of child growth in the social/emotional domain.
- Understand that each child brings unique characteristics to the early education setting that will affect their interpersonal interactions with others.
- Understand that the curriculum, environment, and schedule will impact on children's behavior.
- Understand a variety of positive, direct, and indirect guidance methods and avoid negative methods.
- Understand the theories of children's social interactions and group dynamics.
- Understands positive methods of guidance that are individually and culturally sensitive.

### Indicators/Observable Practices

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Treats every child within the group with care, respect, and understanding.
- Shows individual attention to each child within the group.
- Responds quickly to children's needs.
- Listens attentively to children and tries to understand what they want to communicate.
- Modifies play no longer appropriate for the learning environment.
- Assumes primary responsibility for specific children in the group.
- Demonstrates acceptance for differences in children's culture, language, and religion.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Assists children in identifying and expressing their feelings in culturally and socially acceptable ways.
- Individualizes response to child's behavior in ways that encourage self-control.
- Adapts the learning environment and curriculum to minimize potentially challenging behaviors.
- Uses specific language to recognize and encourage positive behaviors.
- Uses strategies to assist children in learning to express emotions in positive ways, solve problems, and make decisions.
- Solicits information from parents regarding effective strategies to support children in the child care setting.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

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- Moderates interactions with each child based on that child's specific characteristics, strengths, interests, and needs (PITC watch, ask, and adapt).
- Addresses problem behavior or situation, rather than labeling the child.
- Relates guidance practices to knowledge of children's personalities and levels of development.
- Recognizes and responds to individual behavioral problems related to developmental or emotional stress.
- Collaborates with families to develop individually appropriate expectations for children's behavior.

### **Level 4 - Master**

- Uses child assessment to individualize and improve child guidance.
- Develops individual guidance plans, accessing relevant professionals for support as needed.



## **Competency Area: Guidance in Group Settings**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Know the developmental stages of child growth in the social/emotional domain.
- Understand that each child brings unique characteristics to the early care and education setting that will affect their interpersonal interactions with others.
- Understand that the curriculum, environment, schedule, and interactions will impact children's behavior.
- Understand the theories of children's social interactions including group dynamics.
- Know positive methods of guidance that are individually and culturally sensitive.

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### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Keeps children safe from physical and emotional harm while children are in their care.
- Speaks to children with calm, respectful tones.
- Maintains voice, sound, and overall tone in the room at a comfortable level.
- Alerts children to changes in activities or routines well in advance.
- Provides consistent, predictable routines to ensure familiarity and trust.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Provides supportive environments that foster the development of self-regulation and self-control.
- Establishes basic rules that mediate and guide children's interactions and behaviors.
- Explains rules at the children's level of understanding.
- When appropriate offers children choices.
- Provides curriculum and environment that reinforces appropriate behaviors.
- Provides a supportive environment in which children can learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Models problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies and mediates/supports children's interactions with peers.
- Uses strategies that involve children in establishing guidelines and limits for behavior. (NA for I/T.)
- Demonstrates realistic expectations about children's attention spans, interests, social abilities, and physical needs when planning group experiences.

#### **Level 4 - Master**

- Applies theories of child development to improve child guidance techniques
- Develops written policies for effective child guidance.
- Develops guidance policies that include integrating children with disabilities.
- Shares information on guidance techniques with families.

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## 5. Knowledge Component of Best Practice - Learning Experiences and Environment

### Rationale

Practitioners support the development of all children by valuing play as the principal motivator for young children's learning. A curriculum that is developmentally appropriate will promote children's creativity, curiosity, language, literacy, socialization, and problem-solving skills. A bias-free learning environment that respects Iowa's cultures is central to the planning and implementation of appropriate learning experiences for young children.

The amount of space, arrangement of space, and designated use of space directly affects the behavior and development of children. The selection of developmentally appropriate materials is needed to stimulate, encourage, and reinforce children's learning (defined as those teaching items that enhance a program). The availability of developmentally appropriate equipment fosters a child's natural instinct to explore, take risks, and develop (defined as larger classroom items that are not replaced on an annual basis).

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### **Competency Area: Learning Experiences for Individuals and Groups**

### Knowledge

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Understand developmentally appropriate practice and the implications when choosing materials, activities, and planning curriculum.
  - Understand the importance of providing a variety of learning situations (e.g. individual/group, active/quiet, etc.).
  - Understand how to adapt the physical environment to support different types of structured learning activities.
  - Understand how to adapt materials, equipment, environment, and teacher behavior, to meet specific children's abilities and need to succeed.
  - Understand which type of materials supports specific development or learning outcomes.
  - Understand how to incorporate learning activities with outdoor environments.
  - Understand the value of play in supporting and extending learning in all developmental areas.
  - Understand the role of routines and schedules in the context of supporting/facilitating learning activities.
  - Understand the importance of using concrete learning experiences in all developmental areas in a "real" context to make the learning activity relevant to the group.
  - Understand that all learning experiences are built on previous learning and plan opportunities to adapt/expand all activities.
  - Understand the importance of language/communication acquisition in all learning situations.
  - Understand how to incorporate technology in the curriculum when appropriate.
  - Support and extend children's learning by incorporating technology in the curriculum when appropriate.
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**Indicators/Observable Practices**

**Level 1 - Novice**

- Supports and encourage children's participation in a variety of activities.
- Adapts to differences in individual needs and learning styles.
- Implements schedules, routines, and transitions to meet the children's needs.

**Level 2 - Practicing**

- Uses child's home language in daily activities.
- Encourages children to listen to and use language in meaningful ways.
- Includes input from parents when planning activities for children and encourages parent participation in activities.
- Uses concrete experiences and play in an integrated approach to support and extend children's development in language, math, and emergent literacy.
- Provides opportunities for children to express their creative abilities and cultural strengths by planning for play with sound, rhythm, language, materials, space, and ideas in individual ways.
- Emphasizes the process of creating instead of the end product.
- Plans blocks of uninterrupted time for children to persist at self-chosen activities, both indoors and out.
- Provides balance between large and small, active and quiet, child-directed and teacher directed, individual and group, and indoor and outdoor activities.
- Provides space for saving individual/group projects to encourage expansion of and building on previous learning (NA for I/T).
- Uses the outdoor environment and natural settings as an integral part of a child's active and quiet learning.
- Plans activities based on the needs and interests of all young children.
- Selects and uses appropriate materials and technology that will promote creativity, self-expression, numeric skills, and emerging literacy skills.

**Level 3 - Skilled**

- Incorporates goals for each individual child, including children with special needs, and goals for the group as a whole, in daily planning.
- Uses a variety of language strategies to facilitate dialogue between adults and children and among children, in order to develop receptive and expressive language and thought.
- Uses various strategies including modeling and physical and verbal prompting to facilitate children's interaction with their peers and the environment.
- Engages children in problem solving with peers and the environment.
- Provides appropriate challenge within a safe, predictable environment.
- Organizes space into identifiable areas that encourage active involvement, initiative, responsibility, and autonomy.
- Incorporates children's interests throughout curriculum in ways that support individual and group goals.

**Level 4 - Master**

- Identifies and communicates skills fostered in each learning center area to others adults.
- Provides interaction with children in ways that help them develop curiosity and confidence in their ability to think and solve problems and encourages and respects original ideas and expressions.

- Evaluates learning environment and curriculum to maximize learning potential for individual children.
- Articulates the major theories of children's development and learning and applies these theories to diverse settings.
- Uses current curriculum research to evaluate materials, activities, and curriculum.
- Adapts curriculum to a variety of settings and shares curriculum with others.
- Links curriculum to program philosophy.
- Mentors others in development and application of curriculum.

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## **Competency Area: Physical Environment**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Understand the state rules and regulations specific to space requirements for children.
- Understand the relationship between age of children and changes in physical space needs.
- Understand the effect of environmental stimulus (like color) on children's behavior.
- Understand how to organize space to support self-sufficiency and self-control while encouraging exploration and risk taking.
- Understand sound environmental practices to ensure a healthy, safe physical space.
- Understand what constitutes a quality physical space conducive to children's well-being and development.
- Understand appropriate play materials.
- Understand product safety requirements of materials used by young children.
- Understand the importance of hands-on interactive play in the learning process.
- Understand child development and the uses of materials and introduce, reinforce, and extend learning experiences.
- Understand state rules and regulations specific to equipment used in a care giving environment.
- Considers the age and development of children when selecting equipment.
- Have knowledge of the Consumer Safety Guidelines and other community service protection agencies.
- Have knowledge of how equipment supports children's development.

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### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1- Novice**

- Uses equipment that is safe, clean, and free from hazards.
- Keeps room temperature comfortable for children.
- Uses materials that are clean, safe, and free of danger.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Uses equipment that is appropriate in size for the children in the group.
- Secures all equipment, both indoor and outdoor, to prevent tipping.
- Displays children's art work at children's eye level.
- Arranges pathways so they do not interfere with play space.
- Uses materials that are developmentally appropriate for the age of the children.
- Arranges materials on appropriate height shelves to foster self-selection (I/T low shelves).
- Rotates materials to allow for new experiences and exploration.
- Provides sufficient materials to allow for choice without over stimulation.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Provides appropriate storage space for equipment not in use in a safe, secure area away from the children.
- Uses equipment to help define areas whenever possible.
- Dedicates sufficient indoor and outdoor space to accommodate the needs of the group.
- Uses sound absorbing material indoors to help with excessive noise.

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- Avoids over-stimulation by using paints and floor coverings in soft muted colors.
- Uses multiple lighting sources like natural, full spectrum, and incandescent sources.
- Uses a variety of surfaces both indoors and outdoors.
- Provides individual space for children to keep personal belongings.
- Arranges areas both indoors and outdoors that foster small groups/individual play.
- Uses materials that encourage hands-on interactive play.
- Labels bins, shelving units, and toy cubbies, with pictures and/or words to foster children's literacy skills and cooperation in clean-up.
- Uses materials that are relevant to children's real world experiences.

### **Level 4 - Master**

- Seeks to update product safety information on equipment and materials used in the program or by the families.
- Establishes and maintains the environmental safety of physical space.



## 6. Knowledge Component of Best Practice - Families and Communities

### Rationale

Parents are their child's first teacher and primary decision maker. Therefore, it is very important that parents receive family-centered, culturally sensitive services that accommodate their individual needs and the individual needs of their children.

Every early care and education practitioner is a member of a community and serves the whole community just by being an early care and education professional. In turn, the community exists to serve its citizens by making sure they have a good quality of life, a safe environment, and a strong economy to conduct business.

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### **Competency Area: Relationships with Families**

### Knowledge

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Understand the ways parents can contribute to a child's learning.
- Understand a child's growth and development in the context of the family system.
- Know a variety of communication strategies to effectively maintain the families' involvement.
- Understand that parents/families are the primary educators of their children.
- Understand resources necessary for family support.

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### Indicators/Observable Practices

#### **Level 1- Novice**

- Respects the family's role as primary educator.
- Establishes positive communication and relationships with families.
- Treats all children and families with respect.
- Follows rules of confidentiality.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Encourages input by parents about their child's development.
- Involves families in contributing to the diversity of the learning environment.
- Develops and maintains a partnership with families by communicating frequently to share information about their child's experiences and development (daily arrival and departure, conferences, and scheduled appointments; for I/T would include daily written info).
- Offers a variety of opportunities for families to participate in their child's life away from home through an open-door policy, individualizing curriculum for their child, and family led activities.
- Provides opportunities for families to share skills and talents.
- Invites family members to play an active role in their child's care and education, recognizing that families' attitudes influence children's ability and interest in learning.
- Supports children's relationships with their families.
- Recognizes stress factors affecting families.
- Respects and supports cultural differences and diverse family structures.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

## **November 2004**

- Involves family members as decision makers in programs.
- Acknowledges and respects variations across cultures in terms of family strengths, expectations, values, and child-raising practices.
- Provides support to families including parent education and relevant information about child growth, development, and learning.
- Uses a variety of communication tools to ensure information is being shared with families.
- Communicates with families about curriculum, their individual child's progress, and developmental growth.
- Applies the family-centered approach to early intervention.
- Works effectively with families from diverse backgrounds.
- Provides families with appropriate referrals to community resources.
- Plans and conducts family conferences.
- Shares information on effective conflict resolution techniques with families.
- Involves and supports families in development of individualized family service plans (IFSPs) and individualized education plans (IEPs).

### **Level 4 - Master**

- Practices a strength-based, family-centered early intervention approach.
- Shares knowledge of general child development with families.
- Strives to ensure that community diversity and cultures are reflected in program.
- Integrates the various theories of family systems and the effect of stress/crisis on families into planning family supports.
- Assesses, plans, and conducts activities for family support and participation.

## **Competency Area: Use of Community Resources**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Have knowledge of community resources available to program and parents.

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### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Uses community resources that support and assist families.
- Works cooperatively and appropriately with volunteers.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Utilizes services for children in the community such as library story time, field trips, etc.
- Identifies community agencies providing assistance for children and families and provides families with appropriate information.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Develops and follows an established transition plan for all children moving to other early care and education settings and school classrooms.
- Involves community members and organizations in the children's learning experiences.
- Collects useful information about community resources and makes appropriate referrals to families.
- Seeks and maintains a collaborative relationship with parents, community agencies, and other professionals who support the needs of children.
- Uses community resources to support families.
- Participates in community needs assessments if appropriate. (E.g. workforce survey).
- Effectively supervises volunteers.
- Helps families obtain clear and understandable information about their children's disabilities and information about the family's legal right to services. Is this appropriate?

#### **Level 4 - Master**

- Incorporates all aspects of the cultural diversity of the community in the comprehensive services for children and families.
- Advocates for quality early care and education for all families to community and political leaders.
- Speaks to key public groups about quality early care and education services.
- Supports community organizations that foster the advancement of quality early care and education services.
- Works to develop resources in the community.
- Develops relationships with community resources and provides families with resource information.
- Works collaboratively with other community resources providing services to children and families.
- Assists with community outreach efforts.
- Implements and supports volunteer programs, if appropriate.
- Works collaboratively with agencies to meet the needs of families in the community.

**November 2004**

- Represents the early care and education field in collaborative community endeavors.
- Develops and maintains relationships with other disciplines and specialties in related fields.

## 7. Knowledge Component of Best Practice - Program Management

### Rationale

Effective and efficient operation of all early care and education programs, including family child care home programs, is critical to assure the provision of quality services to young children and their families. Knowledge of state regulations and compliance with requirements is essential in early care and education programs. Financial management of the business of child care is necessary to continue to provide child care for families.

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### **Competency Area: Knowledge of Regulations**

### Knowledge

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Know and understand Iowa licensing regulations specific to your early care and education setting.
- Know regulations specific to program (H.S. performance standards, NAYC accreditation, etc.)

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### Indicators/Observable Practices

#### **Level 1- Novice**

- Follows regulations\* regarding health and safety.
- Knows and adheres to ratio requirements.\*
- Releases children only to authorized persons.
- Carries out disaster plans and drills.
- Demonstrates basic first aid and CPR appropriate to setting and ages of children, as required.
- Explains and performs the mandated reporter role for child abuse and neglect.

#### **Level 2- Practicing**

- Practices procedures for fires and other emergencies, including safety procedures for all children including children with disabilities.
- Identifies and reports any barriers/problems in emergency practice drills.
- Ensures safety equipment such as smoke detector and fire extinguisher is in place and operable.
- Uses diagrams, pictures, and words understood by children and adults to post instructions for emergency procedures.
- Identifies and reports problems regarding staff/child ratios.
- Assists in self-assessments of facility for licensing and accreditation.

#### **Level 3- Skilled**

- Maintains emergency supplies and equipment.
- Demonstrates the use of safety equipment when appropriate.
- Identifies and adheres to emergency, illness, and injury procedures.
- Develops and informs others of emergency procedures.
- Documents emergency procedures and drills.
- Conducts self-assessments of facility for licensing and accreditation.

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\* All reference to regulations refers to regulations/requirements that are applicable to your specific program.

## November 2004

- Monitors program for compliance with regulations in addition to ratio, disaster drills, etc. (e.g. sq. foot per child, space between cots/cribs, exits to the outside, lighting, ventilation, etc.)
- Uses code of ethics to monitor violations of regulations.

### **Level 4 - Master**

- Articulates and adheres to laws pertaining to children and families.
- Participates in the revision of regulations and standards to meet program's needs.
- Develops/documents contingency plans to meet ratio requirements in all situations.
- Assesses how regulations affect the quality of the program.
- Answers program specific questions for program reviewers when appropriate.

## **Competency Area: Program Management**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Understand sound business management practices.
- Understand regulations appropriate to maintaining a recordkeeping system that supports the activities of the business.
- Understand the importance of establishing policies and routines for emergency procedures, meals, substitute care, transportation, transitions, etc.
- Reflect knowledge of the developmental needs of the children in the program.
- Understand the processes and methods of observation, supervision, and evaluation of co-workers.

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### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Behaves as a responsible staff member and participates in the program team.
- Keeps appropriate records.
- Complies with program policies and licensing regulations.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Supervises volunteers.
- Keeps accurate records of needs, plans, and practices.
- Supports the program mission statement.
- Organizes, plans, keeps records, and communicates effectively.
- Develops unit plans and curriculum for the classroom.
- Selects appropriate equipment and material for practice.
- Writes objectives and goals for activities.
- Uses available resources to ensure an effective operation.
- Assists in gathering information for evaluations.
- Supports other staff members and professionals.
- Complies with registration requirements of the state licensing agency.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Manages program resources (financial, personnel, time) effectively.
- Distributes written policies to all staff members and families.
- Completes individual staff development plans for self and oversees completion of individual development plans for any staff.
- Evaluates the relationship between the program's philosophy and daily practice.
- Plans parent orientations and education programs.
- Plans and acquires appropriate equipment and materials for the program.
- Participates in strategic planning and goal setting for the program.
- Conducts program observations and evaluations for program effectiveness.
- Plans and carries out staff development opportunities.
- Supervises student teachers and practicum students.
- Provides effective lines of communication among staff and administrators.

## November 2004

- Works effectively with support staff, volunteers, and professionals.

### **Level 4 - Master**

- Develops curriculum for program.
- Develops and implements program policies.
- Supervises, observes, and evaluates each staff member as part of the growing process.
- Identifies evaluation methods and understands their limitations.
- Maintains a legal process for interviewing, orienting, paying, and supervising any staff.
- Uses a variety of strategies to evaluate and modify program goals for children and families.
- Applies knowledge of federal, state, and local legislation; regulations; and professional standards to provide healthy and safe practices for all children.
- Develops staff recruitment, selection, and retention program.
- Designs and implements staff job descriptions, evaluation forms, and procedures.
- Communicates effectively with board/advisory groups.
- Provides strong leadership and visionary direction.
- Ensures the program meets diversity needs and reflects inclusion of children, family, staff, and community partners.
- When possible, represents early care and education on committees impacting children and families.
- Develops public relations strategies to establish the program in the community.
- Identifies legal issues related to early care and education and collaborates with community groups to interpret them.



## **Competency Area: Financial Management**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Understand business management and accounting.
- Understand the value of a fiscal business plan.

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### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Follows procedures for recordkeeping.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Performs basic math computations and makes basic money transactions.
- Follows bookkeeping procedures.
- Utilizes generally accepted business practices.
- Operates within budget.
- Assists in planning budget.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Balances incoming and outgoing accounts when appropriate.
- Conducts and maintains the inventory of supplies, materials, and equipment.
- Plans and maintains budget.
- Develops fee structure.

#### **Level 4 - Master**

- Develops and implements fiscal business plan.
- Matches expenditures with program philosophies.
- Develops marketing plan.
- Seeks additional funding opportunities.
- Writes grant proposals.
- Provides reports on business plan/budget to board/advisory groups.

**November 2004**

## 8. Knowledge Component of Best Practice - Professional Development

### Rationale

Professionalism in early care and education programs involves making decisions and basing program planning and practice on the best professional standards and information available. Quality in early care and education requires staff who continually seek opportunities to develop personally and professionally, and leadership that supports and contributes to staff development. Professionalism and leadership in early care and education programs are demonstrated through the ability to communicate effectively in explaining practice as it relates to research, theory, professional guidelines, and advocacy.

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### **Competency Area: Displaying Professionalism in Practice**

### Knowledge

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Know about the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct for the field of early care and education.
- Know about behaviors consistent with ethical conduct.

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### Indicators/Observable Practices

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Enjoys working with children and models a positive attitude.
- Exhibits good hygiene and personal appearance.
- Demonstrates professional work habits including confidentiality, respect for all people, dependability, time management, independence, and teamwork.
- Supports and complies with regulations and licensing standards.
- Is aware of the professional code of ethics for early care and education and its main topics.
- Behaves ethically, protecting confidentiality of written and spoken information as appropriate to the setting.
- Shows commitment to the program's goals.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Models professional behavior.
- Manages demands of personal and professional commitments.
- Interacts in a manner reflecting value of self and respect for others.
- Uses problem-solving skills in program.
- Performs well as team member.
- Promotes quality in child care services.
- Demonstrates support for licensed care.
- Values reflection on teaching and learning, using staff interaction, training/education, and journals.
- Demonstrates a commitment to professional code of ethics.
- Follows all applicable early care and education regulations and adheres to a professional code of ethics.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Routinely engages in reflection of teaching practices and the behavior of children.

- Is familiar with current trends in early childhood education.
- Articulates professional code of ethics.
- Recognizes potentially unethical practices.
- Participates in program decision-making.
- Makes program decisions based on professional standards.
- Identifies community needs that affect children.
- Exhibits knowledge of advocacy issues.
- Participates actively in professional associations related to early care and education.

#### **Level 4 - Master**

- Participates in group problem-solving of ethical dilemmas.
- Articulates personal philosophy of early childhood education based on knowledge of child development and best practices.
- Articulates and uses a professional code of ethics for making professional decisions.
- Recognizes causes and symptoms of “burnout” and develops strategies to prevent it.
- Keeps up-to-date on research and policy relevant to early care and education.
- Revises practice according to research.

## **Competency Area: Ongoing Professional Growth**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Know of training requirements for early care and education programs in Iowa.
- Know of existing professional development opportunities.
- Know of available professional resources and activities.
- Know of career opportunities and education requirements for work with children and families.

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### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Seeks out knowledge to improve practice.
- Evaluates his or her own performance and sets goals to advance knowledge of field.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Is aware of professional resources.
- Takes advantage of opportunities to improve competence, both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of children and families.
- Accepts advice and constructive criticism to improve practice.
- Actively participates in professional associations.
- Follows accreditation standards.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Uses professional resources to improve practice.
- Seeks out professional relationships to enhance professional growth (e.g., securing a mentor).
- Develops and carries out a personal professional development plan.
- Works toward credentials, degrees, and/or program accreditation.
- Actively participates in career development.
- Supports linguistic and cultural diversity through actions and attitudes.
- Seeks to expand own knowledge and skills in early care and education by attending workshops, taking courses, and reading professional journals, etc.

#### **Level 4 - Master**

- Serves as a mentor.
- Articulates a professional value system and implements ongoing professional self-reflection.
- Recognizes the differences in adult and early childhood learning styles and applies knowledge to practice.
- Uses team members and others to balance perceptions of personal bias (e.g. cultural, ethnic, age, racial, gender) on observation and assessment.
- Explores models of professional development and evaluates/assesses opportunities to promote others' professional growth.
- Designs staff development opportunities for colleagues.
- Disseminates knowledge at local, state, regional, and national conferences.
- Identifies change process and develops practices to support professional growth.
- Integrates knowledge of historical, philosophical, psychological, and social foundations of education including early childhood education into planning and decision-making.



## **Competency Area: Leadership and Advocacy**

### **Knowledge**

Early care and education practitioners shall:

- Know about the benefits/profits regarding advocacy.
- Know about stages of group development and group processes.
- Know about teamwork and collaborative decision-making models.

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### **Indicators/Observable Practices**

#### **Level 1 - Novice**

- Recognizes professional behavior.

#### **Level 2 - Practicing**

- Demonstrates support for licensed care.
- Models professional behavior.

#### **Level 3 - Skilled**

- Identifies community needs that affect children.
- Exhibits knowledge of advocacy issues.

#### **Level 4 - Master**

- Justifies best practice to families, boards, and community.
- Provides a work culture that fosters staff initiative to solve problems and resolve conflict.
- Serves on professional boards and committees.
- Communicates the legislative process and legal and advocacy issues impacting children and their families to others.
- Explains how government policies affect early childhood care and education.
- Holds office in a professional association.
- Serves as a spokesperson to the community and the media on early care and education issues.
- Develops and carries out advocacy plan.